



Department of Commerce Safety Report

SEPTEMBER 2003

Safety Report September 2003

Introduction

This report provides an update to Department of Commerce (DOC) managers and employees on the progress of Departmental safety initiatives and information regarding important Department-wide safety issues for September 2003. The report also contains the latest available accident data for the Department. Section One of the report, Program Initiatives, provides updates on the safety initiatives outlined in the Safety Program Plan available at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/safetyprogram/safety.htm>. Section Two, Significant Safety Issues, outlines safety issues and concerns which arose in September 2003. Section Three, Injury Statistics, provides statistics regarding Department injuries, as reported to the Workers' Compensation Program for August 2003, and an analysis of the data to assist bureaus in focusing their safety efforts.

Section One: Program Initiatives

A new director for the Department's Office of Safety and Occupational Health, Dr. Richard T. Hartman, has been selected and will join the Department on October 6, 2003. Dr. Hartman is a Certified Safety Professional (CSP), a Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH) and has many years experience developing and implementing safety and health programs with the U.S. Air Force. Dr. Hartman is highly qualified for this position and we are looking forward to him joining the Department.

The Department's Office of Safety and Occupational Health has completed safety facility inspections at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administrations headquarters in Silver Spring, MD, Census Bureau headquarters in Suitland, MD, and at Mountain Administrative Support Center in Boulder, CO. A facilities inspection is scheduled for October 6-7, 2003, at Eastern Administrative Support Center in Norfolk, VA. Additional inspections will be conducted at other facilities during fiscal year 2004. The inspections include a review of administrative programs, records of occupational injuries and illnesses, training programs, inspection reports, and other major elements of 29 CFR 1960, *Elements for Federal Employee Occupational Safety and Health Programs*. The inspections are being conducted in accordance with Departmental policy as described in Chapter 2 of the Department's Safety and Occupational Health Manual.

Section Two: Significant Safety Issues

The use of hazardous chemicals is prevalent throughout the Department. Such hazardous chemicals include many common materials such as paints, liquid drain openers, cleaning agents, copier toner, and other chemicals found in most workplaces. Some of these chemicals can cause

severe burns, burning of the eyes and throat, nausea and headaches, poisoning from ingestion, or long-term illness such as cancer. Some chemicals are highly flammable and can explode if proper ventilation is not provided and ignition sources are controlled.

Whenever such chemicals are used in the workplace there are numerous safety and health requirements which are mandated by OSHA regulations. Prior to using hazardous materials, employees must be informed of the hazards of the chemicals, receive training in the use and proper disposal of them, what to do in the event of a spill or other emergency, what personal protective equipment must be worn, and other such precautions to take. When hazardous chemicals are brought into the workplace, a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for each chemical must be made available to employees. This document is a detailed information bulletin prepared by the manufacturer that describes the precautions that must be taken to use the product safely, its safety and health hazards, and other such critical information. The MSDS must be reviewed by employees prior to using the material, and an MSDS for each chemical must be readily available in the workplace for employees to review at all times.

Another important requirement of the OSHA hazardous chemical regulation is the labeling of chemicals in the workplace. Each container which contains hazardous chemicals must have a label that describes the contents, its specific safety and health hazards, the proper handling and storage required, the protective clothing and other personal protective equipment that is to be worn and proper disposal procedures. Manufacturers of hazardous chemicals are required to attach labels to containers that provide this information. If the chemical is transferred to another container, a label that contains this information must be affixed to the container.

The above requirements are the basic elements of OSHA's Hazard Communication standard, which is commonly referred to as the "Right to Know" law. This standard contains additional requirements which should be followed when using hazardous chemicals in the workplace. To view this standard and other OSHA safety and health regulations and standards, go to <http://www.osha.gov>. Under the "Laws and Regulations" column on the right side, click on "Standards," then type in "Hazard Communication" in the box provided. These measures are designed to protect employees from injury and serious illness when using chemicals and help to respond effectively to emergency situations.

Section Three: Injury Statistics and Analysis

This section provides information on the total number of Departmental injuries for the past five years and analyzes the types of injuries across the Department. The information in Chart 2 reflects August 2003 statistics. Due to late submissions, processing limitations and to ensure the accuracy of the information, this section will continue to include information up to the previous month. The data presented in the charts and tables are based upon Departmental Workers' Compensation Program records.

Incidence Rate: The incidence rate (IR) represents the number of injuries and illnesses per 100 full-time workers and is calculated as follows:

$$IR = \frac{N}{EH}(200,000)$$

N	=	Number of injuries and illnesses
EH	=	Total hours worked by all employees during the year ¹
200,000	=	Base for 100 equivalent full-time workers (40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year)

¹ The total hours worked were determined based on the total number of employees and the average hours.

The Commerce Workers' Compensation Program keeps records on all injury and illness claims, including those that did not include any lost work time. An accounting of all incidents allows follow-up and more comprehensive program review by safety representatives. However, the incident rates from those records are not directly comparable, since they include many minor injuries and illnesses that are not considered "work-related" under Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards for private industry. Injury rates may be skewed as safety awareness increases and employees are encouraged to report all injuries, causing total injury rates to increase despite improvements to safety. Using standardized OSHA recordable incident reporting helps to reduce inconsistent reporting. An OSHA recordable incident is a work-related injury or illness that resulted in one or more of the following: medical treatment beyond first aid, a significant injury or illness diagnosed by a physician or other licensed health care professional, days away from work, restricted work or transfer to another job, loss of consciousness, or death.

Table 1A provides data that corresponds to the OSHA recordable injury criteria. The remaining tables and charts include data for all cases submitted to the Workers' Compensation Program.

Chart 1

Historical Total Case Incidence Rate Trend (TCIR)

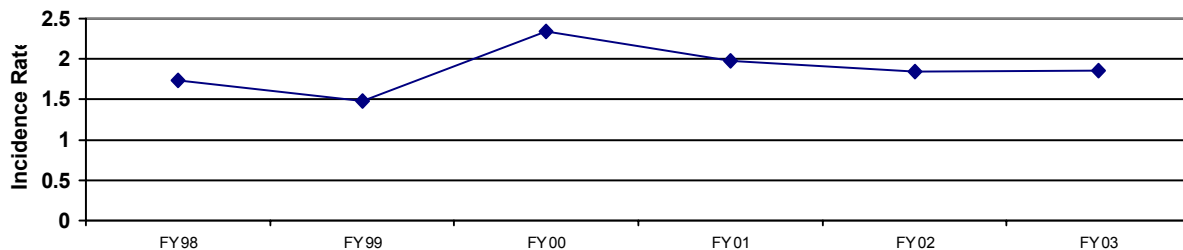
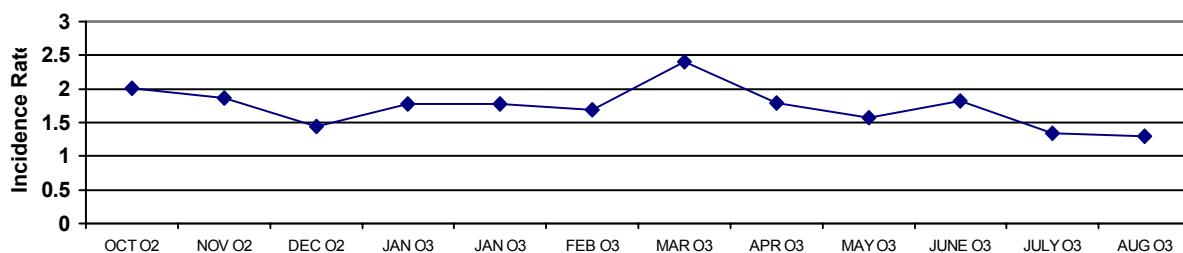


Chart 2

Total Monthly for FY 03 Case Incidence Rate Trend (TCIR)



Major Findings include:

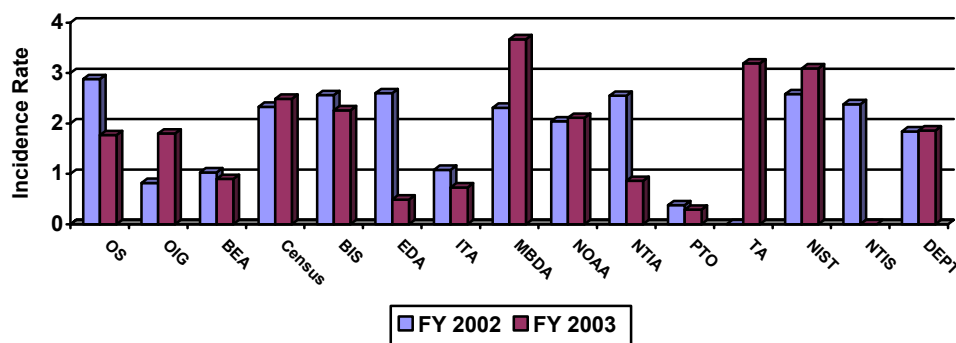
- **The FY 2003 Total Case Incidence Rate (TCIR) to date for Commerce is up slightly from the rate for FY 2002 and is down from FY 2001.** The TCIR through August of FY 2003 is 1.86 (see Chart 1) for FY 2003, 1.84 for FY 2002, and 1.98 for FY 2001. There were several injuries due to fumes and allergic reactions. A total of 581 total injuries were reported thus far for FY 2003 (see Table 1).
- **Of the larger bureaus, the Office of the Secretary (OS) and the International Trade Administration (ITA) had lower TCIRs through August FY 2003 when compared to FY 2002 (see Table 1 and Chart 3).**
- **Of the smaller bureaus (i.e., bureaus with less than 500 employees), the Economic Development Administration (EDA), the National Telecommunications & Information Administration (NTIA) and the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) had significantly lower TCIRs through August for FY 2003 when**

compared to FY 2002.

- **The Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate (TRCIR) for Commerce is down from previous years. The TRCIRs for Commerce are 1.39 for FY 2003, 1.60 for FY 2002 and 1.72 for FY 2001 (see Table 1A).**

Total Case Incidence Rate Comparison (TCIR)

Chart 3



Types of Injuries: Many of the injuries reported can be prevented through improved safety awareness and proper maintenance. A Departmental and bureau focus on eliminating injuries and illnesses are essential. Eliminating injuries and illnesses can be accomplished by evaluating the types of claims submitted and structuring safety awareness training programs to eliminate accidents. Information on types of injuries is provided in charts 4 and 5 and tables 2 and 2A.

Key findings are explained below:

- **“Struck by” injuries were the most prevalent type of injury in August (see Chart 5). These injuries accounted for 14 percent of those reported for FY 2002 and 27 percent in August 2003.** Several of these injuries were due to closing doors on fingers and running into door frames. Employees should use caution when entering and exiting work areas and be aware of other people coming through the doorways.
- **“Exertion” injuries were second in frequency for August 2003 (see Chart 5). “Exertion” injuries accounted for 20 percent of all injuries within the Department for FY 2002 and for 22 percent in August 2003.** Several of the injuries were due to lifting weights during the calibration of equipment. Employees should be aware of the proper lifting techniques, which include keeping the back straight and lifting with the legs.

- **“Slips/Falls” injuries remain a concern. “Slips/Falls” injuries were 36 percent of all injuries in FY 2002 (see Chart 4). The numbers have continued to decrease and account for 19 percent of the injuries reported in August 2003 (see Chart 5). Many of the “Slips/Falls” injuries are caused by water and other substances; such as food, on the floor. Employees should contact the proper office when wet floors are spotted so clean up can help prevent these injuries.**

Chart 4

**Injury Type As Percentage of Total Injuries for
FY 2002**

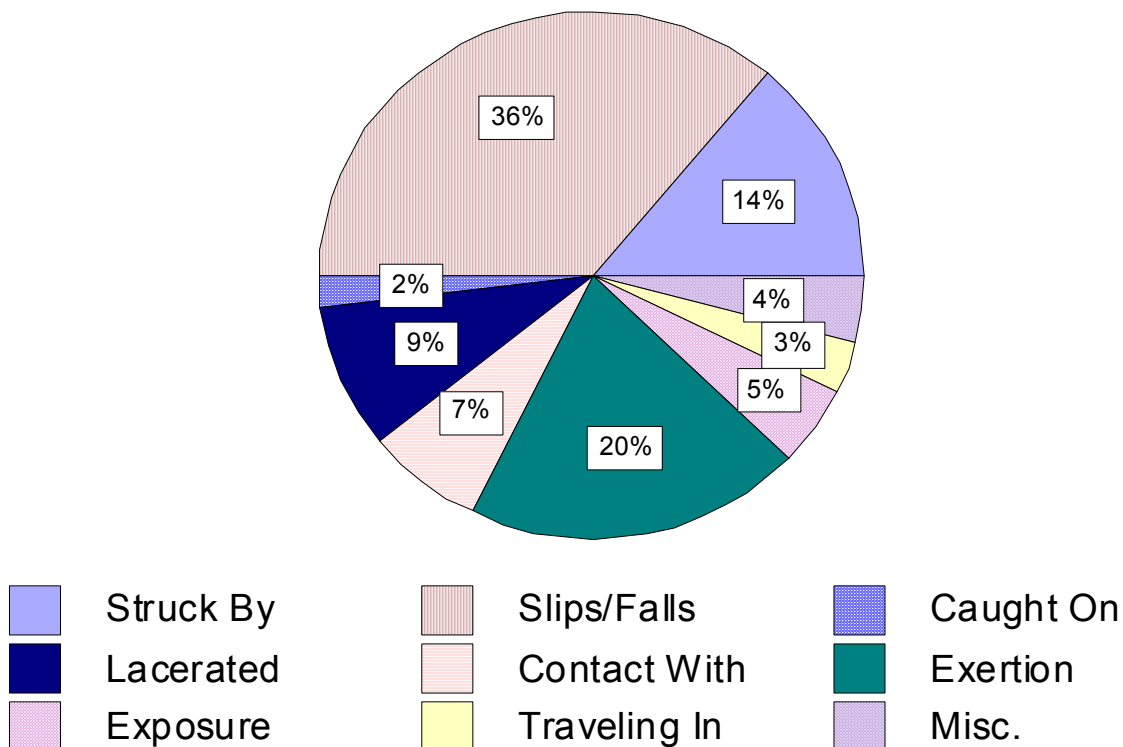
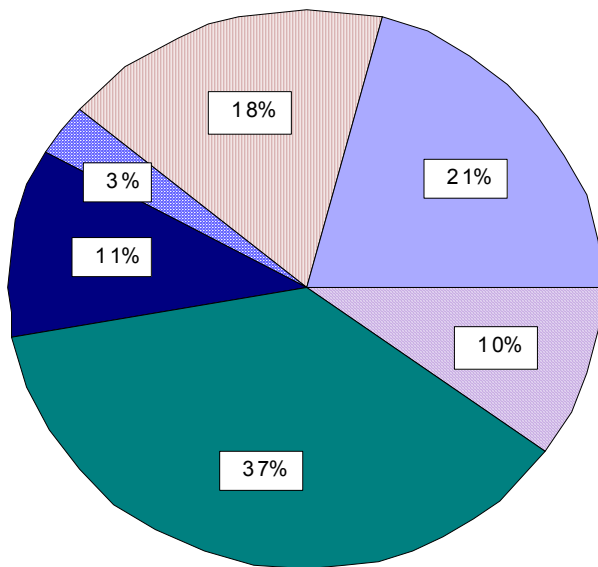


Chart 5

Injury Type As Percentage Of Total Injuries

JULY 03



AUGUST 03

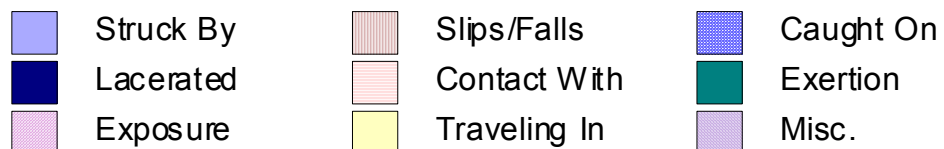
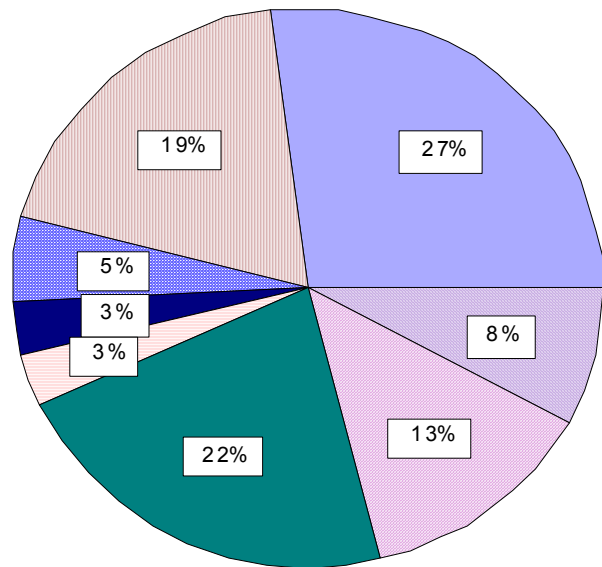


TABLE 1
TOTAL CASE INCIDENCE RATE* (TCIR)

Bureau	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		FY2002		July 2003		August 2003		FY 2003 (To Date)	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.38	19	2.20*	35	3.94	22	2.47	23	2.88	1	1.49	2	3.00	13	1.77
Office of Inspector General	2	1.22	2	1.32	4	2.98	3	2.15	1	0.82	0	0	0	0	2	1.80
Bureau of Economic Analysis	8	1.75	4	0.88	1	0.23	5	1.12	4	1.03	0	0	0	0	4	0.90
Bureau of the Census	282	1.34	311	1.04	383	2.83	393	2.41	241	2.33	13	1.60	13	1.61	221	2.49
Bureau of Industry and Security	10	3.02	11	3.08	15	4.06	9	2.44	9	2.56	1	3.59	0	0	7	2.26
Economic Development Administration	4	1.72	9	3.67	4	1.69	5	2.08	6	2.60	0	0	0	0	1	0.49
International Trade Administration	26	1.33	18	0.92	24	1.23	12	0.62	18	1.08	1	0.72	0	0	11	0.73
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.13	1	1.10	3	3.40	4	4.36	2	2.31	0	0	0	0	3	3.67
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	280	2.52	317	2.78	307	2.69	247	2.18	228	2.04	14	1.49	19	2.03	218	2.11
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.22	2	0.88	2	0.87	7	3.03	6	2.55	1	4.85	0	0	2	0.86
Patent and Trademark Office	38	0.73	27	0.47	29	0.50	31	0.55	24	0.38	0	0	0	0	16	0.29
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3.19
National Institute of Standards and Technology	105	3.57	84	2.87	79	2.82	68	2.34	76	2.58	7	2.90	3	1.24	82	3.09
National Technical Information Service	2	0.66	6	2.61	4	2.15	1	0.52	4	2.38	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	778	1.73	811	1.48	890	2.34	807	1.98	642	1.84	38	1.34	37	1.30	581	1.86
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.4	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3								

* Total Case Incidence Rate includes all cases reported to the Workers' Compensation Program.

** Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Case Incidence Rate.

TABLE 1A
TOTAL RECORDABLE CASE INCIDENCE RATE* (TRCIR)

Bureau	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		FY2002		July 2003		August 2003		FY 2003 (To Date)	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	Actual	
Office of the Secretary	17	2.38	19	2.20*	30	3.38	17	1.91	22	2.75	1	1.49	2	3.00	11	1.50
Office of Inspector General	2	1.22	1	0.66	3	2.24	3	2.15	1	0.82	0	0	0	0	2	1.80
Bureau of Economic Analysis	7	1.53	4	0.88	0	0	5	1.12	3	0.77	0	0	0	0	3	0.67
Bureau of the Census	244	1.15	288	0.96	345	2.55	332	2.04	212	2.05	11	1.35	12	1.49	159	1.79
Bureau of Industry and Security	8	2.42	10	2.80	13	3.52	8	2.17	9	2.56	1	3.59	0	0	7	2.26
Economic Development Administration	4	1.72	8	3.26	4	1.69	5	2.08	6	2.60	0	0	0	0	0	0
International Trade Administration	24	1.23	17	0.86	22	1.13	11	0.57	10	0.60	1	0.72	0	0	11	0.73
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.13	1	1.10	2	2.27	4	4.36	2	2.31	0	0	0	0	2	2.45
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	260	2.34	275	2.41	289	2.53	225	1.98	203	1.81	13	1.38	14	1.49	169	1.64
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.22	2	0.88	2	0.87	5	2.16	3	1.27	1	4.85	0	0	2	0.86
Patent and Trademark Office	35	0.67	26	0.45	29	0.50	31	0.55	24	0.38	0	0	0	0	16	0.29
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3.19
National Institute of Standards and Technology	87	2.96	76	2.60	66	2.36	55	1.89	59	2.00	6	2.48	2	0.83	50	1.89
National Technical Information Service	2	0.66	5	2.18	4	2.15	1	0.52	3	1.78	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	694	1.54	732	1.34	809	2.13	702	1.72	557	1.60	34	1.20	30	1.06	433	1.39
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.4	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3								

* The Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate includes only those injuries or illnesses that are reportable to OSHA under 29 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1904.

** Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Reported Case Incidence Rate.

Table 2

**INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH MORE THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through August 2003)**

BUREAU	NOAA			CENSUS			NIST			PTO			ITA			OS			TOTAL
Fiscal Year	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	
Struck By/Against An Object	24	29	50	56	27	35	16	8	24	6	4	4	1	1	3	5	2	3	298
Falls/Slips	72	59	54	153	96	86	19	22	20	13	7	8	5	7	6	10	2	2	641
Caught On An Object	4	5	12	9	8	3	1	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	55
Cuts/Bites	20	26	5	36	19	16	12	9	1	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	152
Contact With An Object	13	19	5	24	11	4	1	6	0	6	6	3	1	2	0	1	1	0	103
Exertion/ Motion	64	64	69	54	37	49	7	17	20	3	2	0	1	2	0	3	1	7	400
Exposure To Chemicals/ Elements	13	9	7	7	6	18	3	3	3	0	1	0	1	6	1	0	12	0	90
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	4	10	0	10	16	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	43
Miscellaneous*	2	7	16	8	21	10	1	8	7	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	85
TOTAL	216	228	218	357	241	221	60	76	82	31	24	16	10	18	11	22	23	13	1867

* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stroke.

** Decennial Census claims were omitted to provide a clearer picture of injury trends

Table 2A

**INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH LESS THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through August 2003)**

BUREAU	OIG			ESA/BEA			EDA			TA			NTIS			NTIA			MBDA			BIS			Total
Fiscal Year	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	
Struck By/Against An Object	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	15
Falls/Slips	2	0	1	2	2	1	4	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	3	0	3	1	2	6	0	2	38
Caught On An Object	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Cuts/Bites	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Contact with an Object	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	7
Exertion/ Motion	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	2	3	13
Exposure To Chemicals/ Elements	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Miscellaneous*	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	7
Total	2	1	2	5	4	4	5	6	1	0	0	1	1	4	0	7	6	2	4	2	3	8	9	7	84

* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stroke.

